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CHALLENGE

JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

November 19, 2003 Volume 38 #22 Suggested Donation $.50 www.plp.org

Lesser Evil Politics Feeds Imperialist War

WASHINGTON, D.C., Oct. 25 — Today tens of thousands marched to protest the U.S. occupation of Iraq, encircling the White House and halting traffic for a short time. Families of soldiers and sailors condemned the government for using their children as cannon fodder for the rich man's war. Other speakers denounced the Bush administration for lying about its reasons for invading Iraq. While no "weapons of mass destruction" have been found, billions in workers' taxes are helping restore Iraq's oil industry for U.S. corporations in their quest both for greater profits and an edge over their imperialist rivals in Europe, China and Japan.

While calling for continued resistance to war and occupation, the main push focused on ousting Bush. Supporters of Democratic contenders — Kucinich, Dean, Clark, Sharpton (who spoke from the podium), and even the Gore and Hillary Clinton "draft" movements — engaged in sidewalk debates over who was the best.

Progressive Labor Party advanced a different strategy, marching under the banner, "Communist revolution, not liberal politicians." We cited imperialism as responsible for the oil war in Iraq, not just the "neo-conservative" neanderthals (Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld/Wolfowitz). Explaining that imperialism inevitably leads to more wars, including world wars, we said that any liberals elected will merely sugarcoat poisonous military actions to secure the U.S. empire, not stop them.

Over 1,100 people bought our newspaper CHALLENGE. Over 4,000 leaflets attacking imperialism and calling for revolution were distributed.

Some PLP'ers worked with two local anti-racist

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Attack The Source of Capitalism's Super-Profits:

Communist revolution requires an unswerving commitment to smash racism. As Karl Marx wrote a century and a half ago: "Labor in the white skin cannot emancipate itself as long as labor in the black skin is branded."

Marx was referring to the U.S. Civil War and the struggle to abolish slavery. But his comment remains valid today. A modern version might read: "No section of the working class can achieve liberation as long as the system can continue to super-exploit and super-oppress others." Our liberation requires unbreakable class unity against our common enemy. Nothing prevents this unity or cripples us more than racism. Our future as a class depends on destroying racism within our own ranks.

"Despite the bosses' claims of "progress," the wage gap between black and white workers continues to widen."

Capitalism invented racism. In the so-called "New World," the profit system was born from the corpses of tens of millions of Native Americans. It thrived on the blood and sweat of many more millions of Africans brought here in chains. It began to reach maturity on the backs of their descendants. It grew still bigger and stronger on the strength and toil of underpaid immigrant labor.

Today U.S. capitalism tries to rule the world by grinding down its domestic working class and by treating the rest of the international working class as fair game for its low-wage, maximum-profit schemes. On the home front, black, Latin, and Asian workers experience this oppression daily. Worldwide, workers reap the "rewards" of globalized U.S. racism: especially low wages, skyrocketing unemployment, the degradation of women, police-state terror and perpetual war. Iraq and Afghanistan are only the most recent examples of U. S. imperialist adventures. Since 1950, these "interventions" have murdered more people than the Nazis.

Racism has three components. The first is economic. Capitalists need more than average profit or even super-profit. They need maximum profit. Only maximum profit enables a capitalist to defeat his competitors. This is true not just for individual capitalists, but also for entire industries and countries. The ability to super-exploit sections of the working class — to pay lower wages to one group of workers for the same amount of labor power furnished by another — lies at the core of *maximum* profit. This is the dirty little secret behind the historic income inequality between black and white workers.

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EDITORIAL: Racism Hurts All Workers

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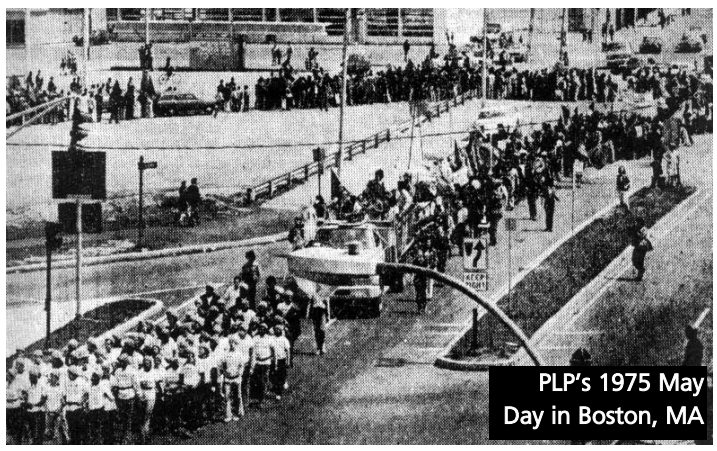
Despite the bosses' claims of "progress," the wage gap between black and white workers continues to widen. In addition, the unemployment rate for black workers is at least double that for white workers. Consequently, huge numbers of black families live in poverty, even as those with jobs work increasingly long hours to eke out a living — 500 hours more annually in 2000 than in 1979. Finally, black workers are penalized for getting sick or old; they are less likely than white workers to have health insurance or a pension plan.

All the money from these racist differentials — amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars — goes straight into the bosses' pockets. Multiply this by the millions of Latino workers suffering from racist exploitation and the totals become astronomical.

The capitalists would love us to believe that white workers have an interest in perpetuating these inequalities. But in pure economic terms, this is a Big Lie. To begin with, workers know that a capitalist will pay the least he can get away with. The more he can depress wages for the most exploited workers, the more other workers' wages (and benefits) will drop as well; the lowest wages define the rest.



PLP's 1975 May Day in Boston, MA

This logic is confirmed by the bosses' own studies of the largest Statistical Metropolitan Survey Areas, which show that a decline in wages and benefits for all workers accompanies every spike in economic racism. W.E.B. Dubois, founder of the NAACP, later to join the old U.S. Communist Party, wrote: "So long as white labor must compete with black labor, it must approximate black labor conditions — long hours, small wages."

From the 1969 Figure Flattery strike in the New York City garment center to the daily struggles of 150,000 garment workers in Los Angeles today, the Progressive Labor Party has a long history of fighting racism on the job and in the unions. In 1973, PLP led over 200 autoworkers in seizing Chrysler's Mack Stamping plant in Detroit against racist speed-ups and deplorable health and safety conditions. In countless contract fights and union elections, PLP has fought racist firings and layoffs, plant closings and wage cuts, worker harassment and abuse. In healthcare, welfare and education, we've united with patients, clients, students and parents. We've pointed out how cutbacks at hospitals, offices and schools were really racist attacks aimed at workers and youth who use these services.

In 1975, PLP politically and violently helped defeat the racist anti-busing movement in Boston. In all of these fights, we've proven how fighting racism is in the interests of *all* workers.

(*Our next issue will contain the 2nd and 3rd components of racism — ideology and the rulers' use of state power — and PLP's answer to the latter in fighting the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis, in the black rebellions and in countless struggles against racist police brutality.*)✪

GI Families Condemn Rich Man's War

continued from front page

organizations at the march, linking racist oppression at home to imperialist oppression abroad and tying racism's central role to the propaganda justifying the war, and its special impact on Latino and African American families.

The Peoples Coalition for Police Accountability distributed over 1,000 flyers relating the war in Iraq to the war at home (police brutality), and obtained an additional 48 signatures on its petition demanding the indictment of racist cop Charles Ramseur, who shot a young black man in the back for no reason, paralyzing him for life. The Metropolitan Washington Public Health Association has been intensely fighting racist disparities in health care. They circulated their material and recruited additional members. Both these mass organizations will grow from the additional interested

people met at this event.

As the electoral season heats up, pressure will build to back "lesser-evil, anyone-but-Bush" politics. We must continue the struggle for local, militant actions against the war and racism in workplaces, on campuses and in communities, and to win those supporting liberals to instead rely on the working class and back revolutionary social change.✪

LA Dinner Marks CHALLENGE Birthday

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 1 — About 60 friends and comrades joined together to discuss the history and future of CHALLENGE and our communist movement. We began with a discussion about the nature of a revolutionary newspaper.

"Just what is Challenge? Is it something like the New York Times, or the Los Angeles Times, to be dumped in the trash after reading it once, or is it something more? CHALLENGE is more than a newspaper in the traditional sense. It's a living, contemporary history of the working class' struggle for liberation, from the workers' point of view. It's an educator and an organizer, something to be studied and grasped, and saved for future generations to read, learn and understand."

(Full story next issue on this dinner and others held to honor the 40th anniversary of the newspaper that strives to be the communist voice of the world's working class.)✪

It's Bigger Than Bush!

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 25 — It seems impossible that anyone could claim the war in Iraq was just about Bush. But that's just what the liberals are doing!

PLP's contingent at the Oct. 25 protest here was very young, disciplined and multi-racial. Similar to the Washington rally the liberal theme was, "Bush is the main problem."

Before the march, a Party study group organized our plan of action. At the demonstration, PLP's young communists spread our ideas through CHALLENGE, leaflets and chants: capitalism is the cause of war; Bush and the Democrats are just different sides of the same war-making machine.✪

40 YEARS OF CHALLENGE

Brooklyn, NY, PLP Celebration to Honor 40 Years of CHALLENGE, reporting about the fight of world's workers and the struggle for a future without bosses — communism.

Hold the Date: February 24, 2004

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

✪PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of capitalism, like wages and divisions of labor.

✪Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✪Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

✪Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!

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TEN MILLION WORKERS STRIKE VS. ITALY'S PENSION 'REFORM'

"[Italy's] Schools, banks, factories, post offices, airports and rail and bus networks were shut down for at least four hours in the most widespread anti-government demonstrations since April 2002" (Financial Times, 10/25). Workers, the unemployed, retirees and students, carried banners reading "Defend Our Future." Over 10 million workers participated in this Oct. 24 General Strike and 1.5 million rallied in the main cities, protesting the Berlusconi government's plan to "reform" the pension plan. These "reforms" would make workers pay into the pension plan for 40 years instead of the current 35 years before retiring at 62 (now 57).

In 1994, workers' defeated the first Berlusconi government's scheme to "reform" the pension plan, forcing him to resign.

Even though the three major union federations (CGIL, CSIL and UIL) supported the strike, they're part of the problem. (COBAS, a rank-and-file group, also supported the strike and held its own protest in Rome.)

In 2002, the UIL and Christian-Democratic CSIL, signed a "Pact for Italy" with Berlusconi that enabled the government to pass Law 30, giving the bosses more leeway in firing workers. CGIL, the biggest federation, wants to elect the "Olive Tree" — a coalition of the old opportunist "Communist" Party and mainstream bourgeois groups. The CGIL blanketed its march in Rome with Italian flags, backing a strong Italian capitalism to better compete with other imperialists.

The metalworkers union Fiom-CGIL, is planning another nationwide strike for Nov. 7, with a massive demonstration in Rome. Last May, the metalworker unions affiliated with CSIL and UIL, agreed to a total sellout and refused to let the workers vote on the contract that covers 1.5 million metalworkers. Fiom-CGIL, the largest metalworkers union, didn't sign the deal and proposed local strikes, which are less effective than a nationwide walkout.

Militant shop stewards organized a series of wildcat strikes, work stoppages and road blockades, forcing the bosses to sign local agreements in 260 plants disavowing the national sellout, but covering only 40,000 of the 1.5 million metalworkers.

Some in the government are calling on the Home Minister to use the cops to "restore order" in the factories of the Emilia Romagna area, where the struggles are more widespread. On the morning of the General Strike, hundreds of cops rampaged throughout Italy, arresting four men and two women for alleged membership in the terrorist Red Brigades. These police raids have not intimidated the workers.

Around the world, 22 million industrial jobs have been lost in the last few years. The global crisis of overproduction is bigger than any one politician and is sharpening the class struggle from Rome to Rio. More war and inter-imperialist rivalry will only force the nationalist union leaders further into the arms of their rulers, regardless of momentary strikes and contradictions.

Industrial workers of the world remain a key force for communist revolution. Their struggles are fertile ground for building an international PLP to coordinate these struggles and turn them into schools for communism.✪

Brazil: Strikers Tired of Paying for Auto Bosses' Crisis

SAO PAULO, Oct. 30 Facing the worst industry crisis in years, about three-quarters of the auto workforce in São Paulo's industrial belt went on strike, halting about one-third of Brazil's auto and truck production at Ford, Volkswagen, DaimlerChrysler and Scania. According to the Metalworkers Union in the ABC regioin, 24,000 workers were on strike after rejecting a 16% raise. Workers at Ford's São Bernardo do Campo plant were told to prepare for "a long fight."

The crisis of overcapacity is at the core of the struggle. In the early 1990's, the world's major auto manufacturers spent billions of dollars building plants here, counting on a potential market of three million car sales a year. But the economy has soured, the market in neighboring Argentina has collapsed and sales never rose above 1.4 million cars a year.

All the major manufacturers are scrambling to export more to make up for the South American slump. Volkswagen recently slashed nearly 4,000 workers from its factories here, while setting up a plant in China to assemble the Brazilian Gol. As China becomes the world's most promising auto market, Brazil will lose investments.

These autoworkers are making it clear they won't continue to pay for the general crisis of capitalism and the problems of the auto bosses. Many workers are also tired of the broken promises of President Lula, a former autoworkers' union leader, who is as unable to improve workers' lives as Bush or Berlosconi. A mass international PLP can turn the struggles of workers in Brazil's industrial belt into a school for communism.✪

LA Transit Strikers Unite vs. Health Cuts, Racist Pay Scales

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 3 — On Oct. 29, 150 to 200 rank-and-file workers among the 2,300 striking the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and First Transit, a company holding a contract with MTA, picketed MTA headquarters. They are fighting to unite mechanics, drivers and riders. First Transit uses racism to pay its mostly black drivers only $8.15 an hour. Some workers' signs read, "The U.S. government has $ billions for invading Iraq, but pennies for workers' healthcare." Workers spoke about the potential power of a united working class to build a powerful force opposing the union leaders' class collaboration outlook. The rally was "unsanctioned" and ignored by the union leadership, but the participants were high-spirited and called for another rally.

The next day, with Southern California hillsides in flames and the strike entering its third week, the liberal LA Times demanded action. "Los Angeles must have reliable public transit," it declared, practically ordering the mechanics' union and the company into binding arbitration. LA has the highest concentration of low-paid manufacturing workers in the country. Nearly two million medically uninsured workers live and work in LA County. They depend on mass transit to get to work.

The liberal bosses want the MTA to concentrate on getting these workers transported efficiently to their sweatshops which the unions have refused to organize for the last 30 years.

The day after the Times' editorial, Neil Silver, President of ATU Local 1277 (mechanics' union) and Miguel Contreras, head of the LA Federation of Labor, jumped into line, offering to end the strike immediately and go to binding arbitration. But the bosses' side is divided. The MTA bosses, for now, refuse to arbitrate, publicize lies about the strikers' conditions, threaten to hire scabs to operate the buses and make deals with other bus companies to expand their routes. They want to negotiate lucrative rail agreements with contractors and engineering companies, while the liberal bosses want the MTA to put `these deals aside in favor of more buses in south and central LA and concentrate on ending the strike through arbitration, .

Union acceptance of binding arbitration sucks the workers into relying on the government, controlled by the bosses to guarantee the maintenance of their system of exploitation for profit. Arbitrators are ex-judges or lawyers who spend their careers defending the profit system.

The arbitration tactic has sown confusion among workers. It chains us to the liberal rulers which contrasts with workers exercising our power as a class to stop production and affect the movement of manufacturing workers here. This temporarily halts the bosses' profits.

But this unholy alliance between the liberal bosses and the union misleaders will not mean decent benefits for transit workers or for riders forced to pay higher fares. This class collaboration and arbitration holds workers back. All LA workers' interests' lie in uniting against these attacks.

The labor misleaders' failure to unite the large number of striking workers here — thousands of grocery workers are still out — has not stopped rank and filers. MTA strikers have joined the picket lines of 250 striking drivers from Teamsters Local 572 at First Transit in Compton who are fighting racist low wages. One driver said, "Bring more MTA workers down here. If MTA can run it the way they want, these will be the conditions for all of us." He described the bosses' attacks as fascist labor conditions in a country preparing for a permanent war economy.

Many workers understand that our power lies in uniting the whole working class against all the bosses. To be successful, that struggle must lead to workers' power, fighting for a workers' state through communist revolution, not to just a better medical plan. PLP is involving the workers in reading and discussing the ideas in CHALLENGE. Their response has been excellent. More workers see that the bosses' system is incapable of meeting our needs, and, as they read the paper and our leaflets, are talking about revolution.✪

At a LA transit picket line, a CHALLENGE seller asked a worker if he wanted the paper. "No, I don't like communism," he said. "Why not?" she asked. "Because the government controls everything under communism," he replied. "No, that's what we have here right now," remarked the seller. "It's called capitalism. Under communism, those who produce all the value would run things and use it to benefit our class." His friends who were listening laughed and agreed, urging him to get the paper. He told the CHALLENGE seller to bring more people to the picket line next week. She promised she would. In turn, she asked him to read the paper carefully and let her know what he thinks. He agreed.✪

Anti-Racist Actions Spur Unity of Workers, Doctors, Nurses

"It's revolutionary!" declared John. "This opens up the whole system," said Bonita. "Race, class, all of capitalism. Workers can learn a lot through this." These were responses about orientations that Local 1199 healthcare workers want to give to all medical and nursing students, doctors and nurses at this large teaching hospital. This idea began last summer when a rash of conflicts arose between black women workers and white and Asian doctors and nurses.

In one incident, a white nurse accused a union member of stealing. In another, an Asian doctor tried to grab a computer keyboard from a black woman unit clerk. He argued with the unit's nursing supervisor. As he left, dietary workers heard him say, "I hate these f——-g bitches!" In a third, a doctor pushed his way between two black women workers to replace a patient chart. When a housekeeper noted his rude behavior, he patted her shoulder and said, "Don't you know who I am?"

In past conflicts, our "victories" in obtaining apologies often intensified racism and nationalism, leaving nurses or doctors even more divided from workers. This time, PLP organized to achieve greater unity.

After the first incident a group of black and white housekeepers marched on the office of the top hospital boss demanding he fire the nurse who refused to apologize (see CHALLENGE, 10/6). Several nurses helped plan the campaign, although none marched with us. Afterwards, the bosses began an investigation, which became the talk of the hospital. Now we've learned the nurse is resigning and the supervisor, who also called the housekeeper a "thief," is gone as well.

In the second and third incidents, the bosses, remembering our march in the first incident, made the doctors apologize before we could even organize a fight.

These small victories have electrified the workers involved and have led to many political discussions centered on equality, racism, sexism and elitism. Many union members believe the education that doctors and nurses receive builds anti-working class ideas that divide healthcare workers. Meanwhile, for the first time we've involved doctors and nurses in these discussions. Some doctors said they're concerned that this inner-city hospital actually has very few black and Latin doctors and nurses. We're exploring how union members can join the doctors in this struggle.

The labor we contribute to patient care is as important as anything the doctors and nurses do. The patient-care cutbacks in this era of war and fascism require the strongest unity of all healthcare workers and patients. This factor led to the proposal that union members orient the nursing and medical staff. In late October, two union delegates formally proposed this idea to two hospital vice-presidents. We're awaiting their response.

But for these activities to be truly "revolutionary," we must strengthen the Party collectives and keep our eye on the primary prize: building the Party and communist revolution. But the attention paid to CHALLENGE distribution and Party recruitment had slipped these last few weeks. A big step in correcting this is re-building the Party collectives city-wide. Some Party members have been "too busy" for collective meetings, leaving them without collective struggle and accountability for recruitment and CHALLENGE distribution. Less "busy" members are often unconnected to the energetic struggles.

As the more active comrades report on CHALLENGE and recruitment, their enthusiasm is having a positive affect on the rest of the collective. Recently two somewhat inactive comrades began job actions protesting a suburban hospital agreeing to a racist's demand that no black, Latin or Jewish workers care for his pregnant wife. Our next article will report on getting "busy" with building communism.✪

Anti-Racist Strike Can Challenge Chicago Bankers' Veto of Teachers' Demand

CHICAGO, IL Oct. 29 Over 30,000 Chicago public school teachers could be on strike by December 4. Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) delegates today voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike vote for mid-November. PLP leaflets and CHALLENGE played a leadership role in the debates. The Delegates and members rejected a tentative 5-year agreement between the Board of Education and the new CTU reform leadership that increases healthcare costs, lengthens the work-day, and fails to reduce class size.

According to union negotiators, we can't win lower class size because the banks and bonding agencies say it could interfere with the Board's flexibility needed to lay off teachers, and would force a lower bond rating. This exposed how the bankers can force a racist attack on Chicago's more than 400,000 mainly black and Latin students.

The union leadership, elected three years ago on a smaller-class-size platform, has caved in on this issue as did their predecessors for the past 30 years. The opportunists who were defeated in that election rejected the contract and the strike vote and are plotting their comeback.

The rejected contract allocated only $1 million for "class-size reduction" out of a $4.5 billion budget. That million dollars is $50,000 less than the Board paid the outside law firm that handled the negotiations. Now they're telling us we must persuade the state legislature to fund smaller classes. But state budgets have been ravaged by Federal tax breaks for the rich, soaring unemployment and the hundreds of billions of dollars being used to wage the unending "war on terror" in Iraq and Afghanistan and finance the "Homeland Security" police state.

By rejecting the contract, many teachers were reacting to the fascist conditions students and school workers face daily. The typical elementary school has no recess. Thirty or more students, many with emotional, economic and/or learning problems, must sit all day, sometimes in a small portable classroom, a section of an auditorium, or even hallways in overcrowded schools. Most teachers work long past the end of the official school day, spend their own money for school supplies, are social workers and nurses as well as teachers, and attend mandated classes and conferences at their own expense. Several dozen teachers have organized "Advocates for Smaller Classes and Better Work Environments" to keep fighting for demands that meet the needs of students, parents and teachers, not the Illinois Business Roundtable or Standard and Poor bond-raters.

The union and the Board are tinkering with the rejected contract, cutting the work-day by five minutes, a 4-year deal instead of five and a smaller increase in healthcare costs But lower class size and other demands to improve the rotten school conditions are off the table. They want us to accept a few pennies to betray the interests of the students and parents we serve.

An anti-racist strike against the third largest school system in the U.S., uniting over 500,000 school workers and students against the bankers who run the city, could tap into a vein of growing anger among millions of workers and challenge mass passivity and cynicism. It's the best way to engage in political struggle, overcome obstacles and shed illusions, creating the conditions for winning parents, students and teachers to join PLP.✪

Boeing/Air Force Tanker Scandal Explodes

Boeing's campaign to win a lucrative contract leasing 100 aerial tankers to the Air Force is in trouble. The Washington Post has run daily exposés of the mounting scandal surrounding the most costly government lease in U.S. history. By the end of October, Secretary of War Rumsfeld abandoned the original deal, announcing he would accept any one Congress wants.

Darleen Druyun, the chief Air Force official pushing the lease, recently left the Air Force to work for Boeing, after selling her $692,000 northern Virginia home to a Boeing lawyer. Her daughter also works for Boeing.

Boeing circumvented the usual Pentagon regulations. Internal e-mails show Boeing actually changed the requirements for the new tanker, like dropping the demand that they match or exceed the capabilities of the old ones, so that the only plane that would qualify was a modified 767, a model that had reached the end of its commercial life. The Pentagon lied about the current state of the aerial tanker fleet to push through the deal.

Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) snuck the lease into a war appropriations bill after receiving an unprecedented $21,900 in donations from Boeing execs. His wife works for a law firm that represents Boeing. Then Boeing secured political backing by playing the "union card." When the Machinists union ran ads demanding that Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona), a lease opponent, register as a foreign agent for Europe's Airbus, a Boeing email noted that the "union strategy [was] in play."

Boeing was taken aback by the public criticism. After all, one company official noted, "the lobbying effort was common practice and the only atypical thing about it was having it on public display…" (Washington Post, 10/27).

Something Even Bigger than Boeing's Profits?

The lease plan involved a lot of Enron-like financial shenanigans. According to the Post, "It is a first in a series of big leases the Pentagon is contemplating, all of which push costs into the future."

The bosses' foreign policy establishment is highly critical of Bush & Co. for not winning the U.S. working class to the need to sacrifice "blood and treasure" for U.S. imperialism. Mid-East wars for oil domination are critical, they reason, and can't be done "on the cheap." These lease deals could backfire when the costs balloon in the near future, antagonizing a working class already unsettled by the Iraq quagmire. "Maybe, it's time to stop trying to run a Bush foreign policy on a Clinton defense budget," warned New York Times columnist David Brooks (10/28).

Best Laid Plans…

In 1996, the ruling class forced McDonnell-Douglas to merge with Boeing after the former sold military technology to the Chinese and tried to virtually give away commercial production to Taiwan for a few bucks just to stay in business. The bosses' strategists figured a larger, dominant Boeing would resist such temptations for the greater interest of the ruling class. But today, Airbus has surpassed Boeing in commercial production.

Even more frightening to U.S. rulers, Europe, Russia and China are poised to challenge U.S. military aerospace leadership. Russia and France have formed a military aerospace alliance (Aviation Week and Space Technology, 10/13), and the European Commission is pushing military research and development, like the new 400M military cargo plane. China is helping finance the European Global Positioning System (space satellite technology), and sent its first astronaut into orbit, boosting its military ambitions in space.

No longer the unchallenged aerospace giant, Boeing put the fast buck above the longer-range strategic interests of the ruling class with this lease plan. It committed the very "sin" for which the ruling class condemned McDonnell-Douglas. Even the bosses' best-laid plans flounder as the capitalist crisis sharpens.✪

Hospital Bosses' Solution For Un-paid Bills: JAIL!

"This concept of debtor's prison, you read about it in Dickens, but it's still going on." The former member of the Champaign County, IL. Board of Review was commenting on the arrests of patients for failing to pay hospital bills or appear in court. (All quotes from Wall Street Journal, 10/30) The whole fascist business is called "body attachment" — if you don't pay your bill, we'll "attach" your body!

A North Carolina patient advocate said, "If it's a car or a vacuum cleaner, they will simply repossess it. What do you want them to do? Give the heart valve back?"

Some hospitals now rank among the country's most aggressive debt collectors. "Hospitals in…Connecticut, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan and Oklahoma have secured the arrest and even jailing of patients who miss court hearings on their debts." Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, IL., a teaching hospital for the University of Illinois and affiliated with the United Church of Christ, has sought 164 arrest warrants for patients with unpaid bills. Yale-New Haven Hospital, Connecticut's largest, has obtained 65 arrest warrants for patients missing court hearings.

The pressure is greatest on the 43.6 million people with no health insurance. They are charged more than insured patients who get discounted rates through HMO's, private insurers and government agencies. Add mounting interest on unpaid debt and court costs, and it is impossible for patients to either pay for, or even obtain, decent health care.

As the hospital industry increasingly becomes a profit-making operation, it uses the bosses' government, police and courts to profit off those already desperate and drive them into grinding poverty. Taking these profits out of healthcare can only happen in a communist society, run by workers to provide for our collective needs.✪

A TALE OF TWO 'MEDICAL ARRESTS'

Kara Atteberry, a single uninsured mother who worked for Kentucky Fried Chicken in 1998, was subjected to a "body attachment" order from Carle Foundation hospital for a medical debt of $1,514. Nine months pregnant, "I was freaking out. I didn't want to go into labor when they arrested me." So she turned herself in and was jailed while her $250 bail payment was being processed.

She was served with another warrant for a bill from a miscarriage. Again, she turned herself in after working her shift in a local pizzeria because she didn't want to be arrested in front of her two daughters. Jailed until making bail, the court pressured her into accepting payment terms she couldn't afford, including an order not to spend her tax-refund money! The judge summoned her back but she didn't go, fearing "the whole hounding process" would start all over again.

The CFO of Provena Covenant, a Catholic hospital that was a party to her arrest, said her "treatment…was consistent with general practices in the industry." (Wall Street Journal, 10/30)

Marlin Bushman, a truck driver in Champaign-Urbana, Il., is a diabetic who has sought care for his wife and three sons at Carle Foundation Hospital. At times he had health insurance that didn't meet his total bill. At other times he had no coverage. In 1998, Carle sued him for a $579 unpaid bill. At a court hearing he agreed to pay within a month. After failing to make the payment, he missed another court appointment because he didn't want to lose a day's pay. On June 13, 2000, his teenage son was picked up for "violating curfew." When the cops brought him home, his last name triggered an alert about his father's outstanding arrest warrant. They arrested him while his wife Diane tried to borrow $250 to pay the $2,500 bail. She remembered thinking, "You bring home my son and take away my husband." Despite being paid thousands of dollars, Carle still wanted that $579.

N.Y. City Workers Need General Strike

NEW YORK CITY, Oct. 29 — Tonight thousands of angry city workers in AFSCME's District Council 37 rallied at City Hall park chanting for a decent contract now. The last one, involving 125,000 current and 50,000 retired city workers, expired June 30. The workers are enraged about 5,000 layoffs last year (although that city fiscal year ended with a $100 million surplus) and the threat of still more layoffs to come. They're furious that their stagnant wages can't pay for soaring city taxes, medical costs, transit fares, bridge tolls, etc. The racist city bosses think they can get away with these attacks because a great majority of the city workers are black and Latin.

They're part of at least 37 states and countless cities facing budget crises because billions are financing the bosses' wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and their Homeland Security fascism here in the guise of a "war on terror." In part, it's caused by the bosses' drive to lower labor costs to meet economic challenges from capitalist rivals abroad.

Tonight union leaders said we must rely on "friends in high places." DC37 executive director Lillian Roberts trotted out every Democratic Party office-holder she could find to promise us a "fair" contract. This diverts workers from relying on the direct power of the working class. Neither Municipal Labor Committee chairperson Randi Weingarten nor NYC Central Labor Council chairperson Brian Mcloughlin called for a general strike of all city workers which put up a real fight for a decent wage increase and stop givebacks and layoffs. Only one union speaker in a two-hour rally mentioned the war in Iraq and the latest $87 billion to continue it. The rally served to let off steam and make workers think these labor fakers were fighting for workers' interests. B.S. rallies with empty slogans that lead nowhere are the hallmark of these pro-capitalist traitors.

As communists participate in these daily struggles, we strive to explain how the system works and what must done to overthrow it. Today, the potential power and unity of NYC workers could really challenge Mayor Bloomberg's plans. To realize this potential, we must build Progressive Labor Party and spread its communist ideas via CHALLENGE among city workers. This will sharpen the class struggle against city bosses and bring communist revolution that much closer.✪

Rank and File Storm Bosses' Office, Reverse Sub-contracting

On September 30th, a group of environmental service workers at a Brooklyn hospital representing the day and evening shifts, stormed into the director's office demanding that sub-contracting cease immediately. These workers toil every day to keep a safe and clean environment for patients in crowded wards. They are on the front lines in the fight to prevent the spread of hospital-borne infections. With staffing cutbacks, the floors and hallways are not being maintained. So the bosses turned to subcontractors.

A worker related this story: Some workers informed him that the director of environmental services had hired a subcontractor, who in turn hired non-union workers to maintain and clean areas within the hospital. In this department, union workers' hourly wages are $15 to $16 plus benefits. A sub-contractor pays $6/hour — a real profit grab for the bosses.

The worker discovered that the director had changed the assignments of the union workers, saying it was "due to staffing issues on the evening shift." One worker aggressively challenged his reasoning and decision about sub-contracting, saying it was unacceptable; that he would discuss the problem with the director's boss and, if necessary, with the Personnel department. The director replied he would "need a day to resolve the problem."

However, the workers secretly planned a counter-attack. Later, learning that the director had lied to them, their anger got their adrenaline flowing. The next day, workers from both evening and day shifts assembled and, chanting "No sub-contracting," stormed into the bosses' office. The director and his boss were totally shocked. Ultimately, they caved in to the workers' demands.

This small victory is not the end of sub-contracting. The bosses will go to any length to maximize their profits. The workers can learn from this struggle — by moving more workers into the fight against capitalism, the root cause of the problem.

The hospital management knows that competition in the healthcare industry impels hospitals to minimize the number of workers they employ, driving smaller ones to close, creating a huge pool of unemployed workers and reaping greater profits for the bosses. That's how capitalism works.

The close collaboration between the Local 1199/SEIU union leadership with the hospital bosses and politicians has resulted in a flood of per diem workers and agency workers, skilled and unskilled, in the healthcare industry. While their wages are slightly above a union worker's, they receive no benefits, sick time or vacations and must pay for their own health insurance. Once again, the healthcare bosses save millions. Class unity between union and non-union workers is a must to answer this attack.

Expanding these struggles to a fight against capitalism can develop a mass base for communist ideas and provide fertile ground for recruiting to the Party.✪

LETTERS

Overconsuming Capitalist Ideas?

I read every issue of your paper online and usually I agree with most of what you say. But I strongly DISAGREE with the article "Environmentalism, A Communist Perspective A Capitalist Nightmare" (10/22). It claimed to offer a "communist" perspective on environmentalism, but basically was a rehash of bourgeois "voluntary simplicity." The author seemed to think that workers consume too much, and working-class consumption and standards of living have to be reduced to save the ecology.

Worse yet, the hyperlinks attached to the article were to mainstream bourgeois environmentalist groups, that basically advocated what might be called "green consumerism" — that is, buying higher-priced goods that supposedly are "good for the environment."

Now, of course, in the real world, the REAL problem is NOT "over-consumption" but the fact that workers DO NOT CONSUME ENOUGH. Just go to any ghetto or barrio and you'll see people who can't afford to eat the right foods, people who don't get dental care or eyeglasses or prescription medicines because they can't afford them, and all the other myriad ways in which this system prevents workers from getting enough of what they need.

And beyond the United States, literally hundreds of millions of workers and farmers die because they can't even get basic needs like running water and refrigeration.

So, honestly, what in the blue hell is this comrade talking about when he/she says that, under communism "individual consumption levels will decrease"?!

Are you guys trying to advocate a starvation version of barracks room communism? I sure as hell hope not...

GB, New York City

Anti-War Marchers Can't Rely on UN, Democrats

On October 25, a group of us involved in our church social action activities and a neighborhood anti-war group held a march and rally of about 60 people demanding an end to the war and occupation of Iraq. It coincided with the one in Washington and grew out of a discussion we had been having on the nature and history of imperialism. It was a spirited march, with chants and songs. Many cars honked their support. Hundreds of leaflets were distributed.

One highlight was a speech linking the U.S./Iraqi war with inter-imperialist rivalry among the U.S., Europe and Asia. Another speaker felt our predominantly white group should be more integrated and anti-racist, and that our next rally should go to the nearby black community.

Unfortunately, the demonstration's mass line was weak. It called on the United Nations to rebuild Iraq and relied on electoral politics and the Democratic Party in the struggle against imperialism. However, we did bring out a group of people familiar with PLP and CHALLENGE, and with our belief that only communist revolution can defeat imperialism. In the future, we must rely more on such friends to guarantee that PLP's ideas are front and center in these actions.

October 25th Marcher

Racism Is No Joke

"Tough Crowd" is a daily program on Comedy Central, a cable TV station owned by Disney-ABC. It's an example of how what passes for "humor" has become increasingly disgusting and a reflection of a racist/fascist society. Colin Quinn, who used to play a "Brooklyn working-class Irish guy" on Saturday Night Live, hosts this show. It gathers a group of comedians to discuss current events. The comments of Quinn and the comedians are racist, pro-war, sexist and generally disgusting. Supposedly all of these things are acceptable because the comedians include some blacks, Latinos, women and gays.

For example, recent comments on the Kobe Bryant incident not only included how the woman "asked for it," but also that Bryant was applauded during his first appearance at an LA game after the incident because "California is controlled by minorities." When the panel was asked about a recent demonstration against NBC-TV protesting a Law and Order SVU episode which referred to Dominicans as "animals," the panel attacked the demonstrators. The black and Latino comedians usually respond to the racist comments by Quinn and the white comedians by attacking all whites, or even attacking blacks and Latinos themselves.

All comments seem to wind up attacking blacks and Latinos, particularly the young people. All the comedians supported the war in Iraq. Some called for the elimination of all Muslims.

Comedy Central began as a "hip" cable network to give comics free reign. It has become a toilet. Programs like "The Man Show" are all based on degrading women. "The Daily Show", a spoof on the networks' nightly news programs, has also become very reactionary. South Park, a supposedly hip adult children's cartoon, is full of conservative, reactionary ideas.

Cable TV indeed has become another cesspool of a decadent system which considers degrading human beings as "funny."

Rex Red

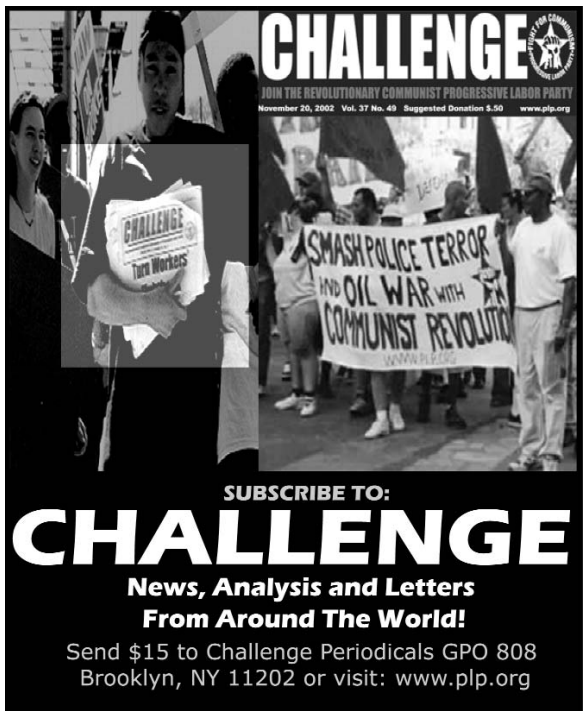
Freedom Riders Discuss The Long Road Ahead

Often we think about struggles as strikes, walkouts, meetings, study groups, etc. But struggle can also be waged in social events, even if they're not Party events.

Recently everyone who traveled on the same bus on the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride came to a party and many brought friends. We celebrated our new friendship and the road of struggle we're building together. There was good food, drinks, and many pictures reminding us of the week we spent with each other. But there were also discussions about the road ahead. Most of these young people had never heard our ideas, other than half-truths and lies. They were very impressed by the fact that there is still a communist movement. Several took CHALLENGE so we decided to organize a study group.

Someone said political work should be done with urgency and patience. I think I'm learning that lesson. The road to communism is paved by working-class people joining together to build the mass movement that will destroy the capitalist system. That road will be built by millions of class-conscious people joining the working-class party, the communist PLP. The road to communism looks bright.

Red Rider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'Dream Act': A Military Recruiter

In the article titled, " Freedom Rider Challenges Hack's Pro-War Patriotism" 10/22) the rider said: "There were fourteen nationalities trying to get the Student Adjustment Act/ Dream Act passed," implying this is a spontaneous grass roots project, but the opposite is true.

The Dream Act (also known as the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act) is sponsored by Orrin Hatch, the Utah Republican who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Act would grant legal status to teenagers with five years in the country, have a high school diploma and no criminal record. It would also make it easier for undocumented students to pay the lower in-state tuition at state universities. The bill has the support of 36 senators, including 12 Republicans.

Obviously this bill is a pet project of the liberal rulers who are trying to win immigrants, and especially their children, to feel welcome here, to develop the gratitude and loyalty that would inspire them to fight and die defending U.S. imperialism. Many who would get legal status would go straight into the military. College graduates could then lead organizations and public institutions, and win immigrants and others to have confidence in the bosses' government, especially in Homeland Security. Who better to lead immigrant soldiers into battle than the officers graduated from these institutions? War and fascism is the bosses' only agenda. Electoral politics is a big part of achieving both.

The rider also says, "We talked with congressmen about legalization, etc…" Obviously, the caravan went to Capitol Hill, but there's no mention of the caravan leaders' treachery for having taken the riders to the den of the greatest terrorists and mass killers in history to have amicable discussions. This should have been used as more proof that the caravan sponsors-unions, churches, student and community organizations - are consciously helping the U.S. liberal rulers win support for their imperialist wars and their brand of fascism, while keeping us trapped in their electoral circus.

We should work inside these mass organizations to recruit to the Party and expose the liberal bosses and their patriotic fascist agenda.

A comrade

Is National Health Plan the Solution?

The LA grocery and transit strikes center on rising health care costs the bosses are shifting onto workers. Kent Wong, head of UCLA's Labor Strategy Center says the only solution is a government-paid national health plan. Some Democrats say something similar. It sounds good, but is it?

First, as CHALLENGE has shown, the bosses want to improve the health of potential soldiers so they're fit to serve in the military, as well as the health of workers in war plants. But in this period of permanent wars for oil profits, a national health plan will ration health care, with some care for those deemed necessary for the war economy and from less to none for all others. Some union contracts already provide that a national health plan would cancel workers' health insurance, saving employers like GM, GE and Boeing billons in coverage of retirees and current workers.

California Red

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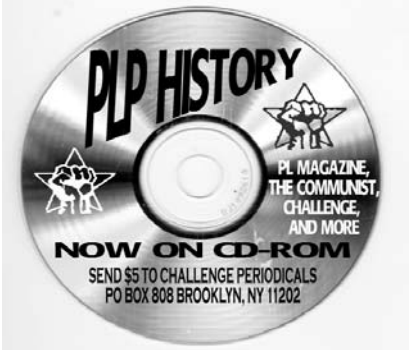
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Jobless 'Recovery' KOs Everlast Workers

BRONX, N.Y., Nov. 1 — "I've given all my life here and I'm leaving with nothing in my hands," declared Gina Ynsante, 46, a shop steward who is losing her job at Everlast after 30 years. "My husband isn't working right now and I have a $520-a-month car payment. I don't know how I'm going to make it."

Don't tell these Everlast workers about the 7% 3rd quarter growth in the economy. The world's largest manufacturer of boxing equipment landed a knockout punch on its 100 mostly immigrant workers, kicking them out in the street by closing its factory here and "absorbing" the work in its Missouri plant. That 7% "growth" rate saw over 50,000 more jobs lost in the third quarter, so the only thing growing for workers is the length of the unemployment lines.

Xiomara Lopez, 51, with 12 years at Everlast, worries about finding another job. "Everybody here lives paycheck to paycheck," she says. "We're mostly poor people."

Everlast's CEO says, "This move is really a very good thing for the company financially," a necessary step to save $2.8 million a year and satisfy shareholders. (N.Y. Daily News, 11/1) So the 100 workers, mostly from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Ecuador, are left with 2 or 3 weeks severance pay, not much when earning $8 to $12 an hour.

Meanwhile, the Everlast workers in Moberly, Missouri — who make even less than the Bronx workers — will be working a lot harder, with no new hiring, to "absorb" the production of the closed Bronx plant. That's how the bosses maintain profits — on the backs of workers.

This is part of the larger attack on the working class caused by the current capitalist crisis. Productivity is up — fewer workers working harder — while the "jobless recovery" marches on. Three million jobs lost in three years, and counting, adding to the nearly 20 million unemployed.

As long as there's a profit system, the bosses will move production to wherever they can make the most bucks. The only solution for the working class is to deliver the knockout blow to capitalism: kick out the bosses and establish workers rule — communism.✪

Rap Rulers' Delight: Super-exploitation and Profits

Hip hop producer and boss Sean ("P Diddy") Combs had more than marathon woes this week. The owner of Sean Jean clothing had to deal with accusations of horrible working conditions in a Honduran plant that produces his clothing.

Lydda Eli Gonzalez, a garment worker, charged that the factory making Sean Jean clothing, Southeast Textiles, grossly underpays its workers. She was fired for trying to unionize workers there, fighting the daily body searches, contaminated drinking water and 11- to 12-hour shifts. Workers received only 15 cents per completed shirt that they sell at major retail stores for about $40. Others have charged that female workers were given mandatory pregnancy tests; those who tested positive were fired. Gonzalez also said workers were allowed only two timed toilet breaks a day!

P Diddy and his partners claim regular inspections take place and that they're investigating all the accusations.

The Hip Hop ruling class — Sean Combs, Russell Simmons (head of Def Jam Records) and Andre Harrell (CEO of Uptown Entertainment) — has made millions off the sweat and blood of others. According to the Recording Industry Association of America 2000 consumer profile, rap music is a $1.8 billion industry. Like good capitalists, these rap entrepreneurs had to expand their power and wealth beyond the music industry. These three (as well as others) have made an industry out of the commodification of black working-class culture.

Sean Jean Clothing's only reason for manufacturing in Honduras is the low wages there. The Associated Press reported that the minimum wage in Honduras is 55¢ an hour. The owner of Southeast Textiles proudly claimed his workers are paid "better" than that: 90¢ an hour!

Well, Sean Combs' company has run all the way to the bank by super-exploiting workers both here in the U.S. as well as in Latin America. It made over $25 million in 1999 and over $100 million in 2000. Combs' worth now in 2003 is nearly half a billion dollars. Kaching!

His isn't the only hip hop company making clothing at Southeast. Roca-wear, co-founded by rapper Jay Z and producer Damon Dash, also produces its line there. Roca-wear, coincidentally, is jointly owned by Russell Simmons who manufactures Phat Farm clothing as well.

Politically, these rap rulers have proclaimed liberal politics and claim to speak for legions of black working-class youth. Combs ran in the 2003 New York City Marathon to raise money ($2 million) for these youth. But actions speak louder than words. Like all good capitalists, they seek the cheapest labor to produce their goods, in effect lowering the wages of black, Latin and white workers here in the U.S. (*See page 1 article on racism.*) Then they smack us in the face by charging $40 a shirt. These bosses are no friends to the working class anywhere in the world.

(Information from: **Rhythm and Business: The Political Economy of Black Music*; Edited by Norman Kelly; Akachic Books)***

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Liberals helped US into war

The Iraq Liberation Act, signed into law by President Clinton [was] a piece of legislation that made regime change in Iraq the official policy of the United States. (NYT, 11/2)

Capitalism can't fill needs

There is enough land to grow the staples for the world population and to provide a mixed diet — fruit and vegetables and some meat — which delivers our nutritional requirements. But there is not enough global capacity to support a population whose eating habits are being pushed by commerce towards ever greater consumption of meat….

So why do we farm so perversely? Because everything in agriculture, as elsewhere, is translated into money. Efficiency is measured in cash terms, and livestock are a way of making more money out of staples….

Other concerns — social, moral — do not even get onto the balance sheet, because you cannot measure them in cash terms. (GW, 10/8)

US no help to Afghan women

Afghan women still face shocking patterns of rape, domestic violence, forced marriage and the routine denial of justice, with the international community failing to protect them in the two years since the Taliban regime ended, according to Amnesty International….

The US, Britain and other foreign governments have also done little to promote better standards….

The report paints a picture of women being treated as chattel, which long predates the Taliban. (GW, 10/15)

US suicides high in Iraq

One anomaly in the casualty list is a high rate of suicide among the military in Iraq compared with the troops in Vietnam. This does not square with reports that say morale is good in Iraq….

On average, American soldiers are attacked 30 times a day across Iraq. (NYT, 11/2)

Biz success = robbing workers

Wal-Mart has already helped push more than two dozen national supermarket chains into bankruptcy….And unionized supermarket workers feat that Wal-Mart's invasion will…pull…down their wages and benefits, which, taken together, are more than 50% higher than those of Wal-Mart workers. At Wal-Mart, the average wage is about $8.50 and hour, compared with $13 at unionized supermarkets….

A big savings for Wal-Mart comes in health care, where Wal-Mart pays 30% less for coverage for each insured worker than the industry average. An estimated 40% of employees are not covered. (NYT, 10/19)

Typical democracy a cruel flop

Guatemala's Gen. Efrain Rios Montt … waged a scorched-earth campaign, ostensibly directed against leftist guerrillas, and engaged in hundreds of massacres of rural Mayan Indians

Twenty years later the general….is a candidate in Sunday's election….

In Guatemala, as elsewhere in Latin America, criminals and mafiosos have found in "democracy" the perfect Trojan horse for attaining and preserving real power inside essentially hijacked states…."At the end of the 1970's, the army established a new organization…which,…with complete impunity, dedicated itself to assaulting Guatemalans."

….The army's power is based on organized crime….

What chance, then, can "democracy" really have in Guatemala….Guatemala isn't the only place….How can it succeed elsewhere? (NYT, 11/3)

Organize to revolt, not to vote

Bolivians…tend to take to the streets rather than write to their MR [Congressman]. Experience has taught them that governments give them little that the people have not wrested by force…. (GW, 11/5)

Million of US youth: no future

Chicago…is roughly representative of conditions in other major urban areas….And 22% of all Chicago residents between the ages of 16 and 24 are both out of school and out of work….

They hustle, doing what they can — much of it illegal — to get along. Some are homeless….

An incredible 45% of black men in Chicago aged 20 to 24 are out of work and out of school….

Among…immediate effects of this disconnect from both educational experience and the labor market are increased rates of crime, drug use and gang membership. Among the less obvious but most tragic effects is the failure of healthy young men and women to realize their potential to live satisfying, constructive lives. (NYT, 10/20)

No poverty: 'bad' kids turn good

New research that coincided with the opening of an Indian casino may…suggest that lifting children out of poverty can diminish some psychiatric symptoms….

Rates of deviant behaviors, the study noted, declined as incomes rose….

As time went on, the children were less inclined to stubbornness, temper tantrums, stealing, bullying and vandalism….

After four years, the rate of such behavior had dropped to the same levels found among children whose families had never been poor. (NYT, 10/21)

NY Times Uses Nazi Anti-Red Lies to Recall Pulitzer Prize

The bosses claim communism is dead, so "dead" they must continue to slander and bury it. Joseph Stalin remains the main target of their vilification. Dead more than 50 years, he is still the man upon whom they love to heap abuse.

During the Cold War, the U.S. government propaganda machine identified Stalin as a monster equal to Hitler. During the McCarthy period, apologists for the profit system coined new words like "totalitarianism" to equate communism with fascism. After Stalin's death, the rulers said he was "worse" than Hitler. They summoned squadrons of scribblers to invent wild fables about the numbers of Soviet workers and peasants whom Stalin supposedly murdered. These lies pass for official history in many school and college textbooks.

The lies serve the present interests of U.S. imperialism. But although the rulers always hated Stalin and communism, they didn't always push these fictions. In fact, the Roosevelt administration entered into a tactical alliance with the Soviet Union after Hitler had double-crossed his imperialist pals in Europe at the beginning of World War II. The U.S. was one of 17 countries to invade the infant Soviet Union in 1919, causing the deaths of 4½ million Russians — trying to "strangle the infant in its cradle," as the arch-imperialist Winston Churchill vainly boasted. But in the 1930's U.S. and UK bosses decided Hitler was a major danger to their interests. (Ford, Charles Lindbergh and a good chunk of the UK Royals had been pushing for an alliance with the Führer). Finally, in June 1944, realizing the Red Army might beat Hitler all by itself, the U.S. and U.K. invaded Nazi Occupied Western Europe.

To prepare the way for this tactical alliance, the anti-Hitler U.S. bosses allowed some of their most prominent diplomats and journalists to write somewhat objectively about the Soviet Union of the 1930s. Books like Ambassador Joseph Davies' "Mission to Moscow" told the truth about the "purge trials" of the 1930s, namely that the people whom Stalin had put on trial were indeed guilty of conspiring to destroy Soviet socialism in secret alliance with Hitler and the Nazis. The most prominent journalist who wrote about the Soviet Union then was Walter Duranty of the New York Times. Duranty had no love for communism. A British citizen, he always voted liberal. But he objectively described the prodigious achievements of socialist construction in Russia, and he wrote about the extraordinary accomplishments and political commitment of Stalin and his closest associates, Molotov, Voroshilov, Zhukhov and others.

'In fact, Duranty never denied that some, perhaps as many as a million, starved during this period.'

Now, many years after his death, Duranty is receiving the same vilification treatment as Stalin. A campaign, led by the same Ukrainian nationalists that fought on the Nazis' side and right-wing scribblers in the U.S., is under way to revoke the Pulitzer Prize he won in 1932 for his reports on the USSR. His greatest supposed "crime"? Minimizing the number of deaths due to malnutrition in the Ukraine during 1932-3.

In fact, Duranty never denied that some, perhaps as many as a million, starved during this period. After World War II, he wrote: "1932 was a year of famine in Russia..." Duranty knew, as Mao Zedong once wrote, that "revolution is not a tea party." But the figure of "10 million dead" in the Ukraine is a hoax, perpetrated then by pro-Hitler groups of Ukrainian nationalists and perpetuated today by their contemporary descendants, as well as by anti-communist shill Robert Conquest, whose CIA links have long been established.

In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, CHALLENGE published a series of exhaustive articles debunking the lies of the Ukrainian nationalist-Conquest axis. We quoted evidence cited by many prominent scholars, including anti-communists, which exposed Conquest's figures as "rubbish." Yet as recently as November 2, the Times continued to cite Conquest as gospel. The Times editors would apparently happily sacrifice Duranty's reputation on the altar of anti-communism.

This orgy of hypocrisy about the so-called "starvation" policy of the world's first socialist regime hides the unspeakable conditions contemporary imperialism foists upon the vast majority of the world's workers. A billion live on the equivalent of $1 a day; two billion others on $2. Even Conquest's inflated falsehoods pale before the true horror of the millions of deaths caused each year by the profit system's economic crimes. And these murders don't include the butcheries committed by capitalism in its wars for power and profit.

As we've written elsewhere, Stalin and the movement he led made many errors. But he, and it, helped our class achieve some of its greatest triumphs. We can learn from and build upon these triumphs. Despite many weaknesses, Walter Duranty's books and articles provide useful insight into this crucial period of working class history. We must not fall for today's anti-communist slanders against Stalin. We can still learn much from him, and a great deal of it is available in Duranty's well-written prose.

(Next issue: how, on Nov. 7, 1917, the Bolsheviks led workers to power, marking the most important event of the 20th Century for the world's workers; and how the Stalin leadership rebuilt the USSR after the devastation caused by the Nazi invasion and led the fight against the rise of U.S. imperialism as the leading imperialist world power.) ✪

Marine Shook Up Over Orders to Kill Iraqi Kids

Recently I had a conversation with a fellow teacher about the military and the war in Iraq. She said her son was in the Marines and had recently returned from Baghdad. I told her that Marines were usually cannon fodder, the first to be thrown into combat situations. I said my uncle was a 20-year-old Marine sent to Korea in September 1950, three months after that conflict broke out and that when he came home a year later, he didn't want to talk about his wartime experiences. He was a changed person, quiet and reticent, not like the personable, sociable young man our family knew before his Korean duty.

The teacher said her son also did not want to talk about his Baghdad duty, that he, too, had become very quiet. Once when he did open up to her, he said, "Mom, they told us to run over children," apparently in their military vehicles. I asked why. She said soldiers were told that children may have concealed explosives on their bodies.

Comrades, a system that traumatizes its children, and the children of workers worldwide for the sake of empire must be smashed. Our children, indeed all of us, deserve to live in a world that promotes and fosters humanity, not profit. Communism is that system and the hope for humanity.

A SF Bay Area Teacher Comrade

CHALLENGE: 40 Years of Communist Journalism

CHALLENGE is entering its 40th year as a revolutionary communist newspaper voicing the interests of the international working class. The paper was born in the summer of 1964 during the Harlem Rebellion, the first of the many anti-racist anti-cop-brutality uprisings that shook major U.S. cities in the 1960s and early '70s. J Edgar Hoover, the FBI's wannabe Führer, accused PL of leading the rebellion. The Harlem rebels flashed a PL poster as their banner, titled "Gilligan the Cop, Wanted for Murder." Racist Cop Gilligan had killed James Powell, a 15-year-old black Harlem youth. Several PL members were arrested and sentenced to prison, accused of leading that rebellion.

During those early years, CHALLENGE and the Progressive Labor Movement (PLM, forerunner of the Progressive Labor Party) led another major struggle to smash Congress's fascist House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the Homeland Security gang of that time. HUAC was a witch-hunting outfit which for years had destroyed the lives of many decent people, accusing them of being "Reds" and "Moscow agents."

PL-Led Trip to Cuba Broke JFK's State Department Ban

The first confrontation occurred in 1963. The N.Y. Times reported: "Current investigations by the grand jury in Brooklyn and the House Un-American Activities Committee involve travel to Cuba in defiance of a State Department ban. Mr. Rosen [a PLM leader] says nine of the 58 students who made the eight-week trip this summer were PL members…"

Traveling to Cuba then was a real political defiance of the Kennedy administration, which had just declared a embargo on the island and, it was later revealed, was trying to assassinate Fidel Castro, including using Mafia hitmen. Ironically, the chickens came home to roost when later that year JFK himself was murdered by the same kinds of forces he used to attack Cuba.

"More than 500 students had contacted PL to join with us in defying the State Dept. travel ban….75 were selected to go by the PL-led Ad Hoc Committee to Travel to Cuba. An official invitation was secured from the Cuban Federation of University Students." (History of PLP, PL Magazine, August-Sept. 1975). Many opportunists in the phony left labeled us "crazy adventurists" for trying to break the ban.

When Canadian authorities denied the request to fly via that country, we announced our next route to be through Mexico, knowing full-well the FBI and, CIA, would try to stop us. But the real plan was to travel to Prague in Europe and then on to Cuba. That tactic worked. When the young travelers returned to NYC, their passports were declared invalid.

PL'ers who led the trip faced up to 20 years in jail. PLM then decided the best defense was to take the offensive. Another trip was organized. Over 1,000 applied to go; 84 were chosen. The State Dept. was taken aback. A fight went all the way to the Supreme Court and the charges were dropped. The ban on travel to Cuba was broken.

The next confrontation with HUAC occurred in Buffalo, N.Y. in April 1964 where the witch-hunters were ostensibly holding hearings on the activities of "new communist organizations," but were really trying to drive us out of basic industries. Again, PL members took the offensive. "Some 200…picketed outside the courthouse," reported the N.Y. Times (4/30/64). "Tonight's fourth and last witness, identified as Tobias Schwartz, was dragged from the hearing room. He had walked up to a table, picked up a microphone and screamed: 'Is this table bugged?' Then he charged that the committee was illegal. Four marshals seized him and he slammed the microphone on the table as he was hauled away.

"His wife, Helen, who had been called earlier…as a witness, jumped up…and shouted several times, 'Leave him alone!'" HUAC's intimidation failed once again.

The final confrontation occurred in Washington, D.C. in 1966 after the PLM had become the Progressive Labor Party. PL was called to HUAC hearings "investigating" opponents to the bosses' invasion of Vietnam. Again, instead of cowering in front of these fascists and "refusing to answer by taking the 5th amendment," PL members openly declared that they were communists and denounced HUAC as a fascist group.

While hundreds picketed outside the hearings, marshals dragged a PLP leader out of the session as he shouted, "U.S. imperialism get out of Vietnam!" His picture hit every front page in the country. This action effectively ended HUAC; soon afterwards Congress dissolved it as a House committee, although its witch-hunting would become the forerunner of the present Homeland Security mob. ✪